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A. C. Swinburne Esq.
With the Author's
kind regards

Hollingbury Copse
Brighton.
Jan. 1880.

Hamlet Notes.

MEMORANDA

ON THE

Tragedy of Hamlet.

BY

J. O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, F.R.S.,
F.S.A., Hon. M.R.I.A., Hon. M.R.S.L.

The fact is, the subject is simply inexhaustible. The study of Shakspeare is as the study of Nature herself, whose favourite son he was. And the best of Shakspeare-students, if we ask him, as Charmian asked the soothsayer, "Is 't you, sir, that know things?" will reply, the more humbly and sincerely the better he is,—

In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read.

"A little I can read"—that is all that the truly competent scholar will dare to say.—*Athenæum Review of the Variorum Hamlet edited by H. H. Furness.*

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JAMES EVAN ADLARD.

1879.

PREFACE.

THE following pages contain merely a few straggling memoranda on the tragedy of Hamlet selected from a large number of notes made chiefly in years gone by, and now issued in the hope that they include suggestions which may be useful to future editors or critics. Had I consulted my own reputation, or now cared much for the slender credit attached to works on Shakespearean criticism, it would have been better to have framed the notes into a connected essay; but the stealing steps are now in rapid movement and warn me that, unless this and similar contributions to Shakespearean literature are produced in a slipshod and uncorrected fashion, they will never see the light at all.

The question whether the first edition of Hamlet is a first sketch or a surreptitious copy of the tragedy is not one of merely biographical curiosity. Upon its settlement depends the extent to which it can be used in the

formation of an eclectic text, and it is hoped that some assistance is here given in that direction.

The older tragedy being lost, there is only the indirect source of the materials employed by Shakespeare to be traced in the novel of Belleforest. That novel should be carefully studied by those who would desire to unravel some of the difficulties probably arising from the use made of the older play. There are now a rapidly increasing number of intelligent and able young Shakespearean students, some of whom may perhaps excuse the suggestion of studying this portion of the interminable subject of Hamlet and cognate enquiries, in preference to being seduced into entering the attractive and dangerous arena of philosophical criticism. It is a singular circumstance that some of our early dramatists, either through carelessness or from the knowledge that the foundation stories would be generally familiar to their audiences, occasionally assume incidents in those stories that are essential to a perfect comprehension of their plays.

Let me add that the more I read of the tragedy of Hamlet the less I really understand it as a whole, and now despair of meeting with

any theories that will reconcile its perplexing inconsistencies, making of course allowances for those that are most likely intentional. It should not be supposed that, in any of the following scattered notes, written at various times, I have the presumption to imagine a success in mastering its difficulties. There may be a few suggestions worthy of consideration, and my readers, if I have any, must not expect to find much more.

J. O. H.-P.

Hollingbury Copse,
Brighton.
November, 1879.

MEMORANDA.

In attempting to form an opinion on Hamlet's conduct has sufficient prominence hitherto been given to his deference to national opinion in conjunction with the circumstance that there was no available evidence of the sovereign's guilt? The only testimony, that of the apparition, was expressly withheld from revelation, and, even if it could have been disclosed, its validity would have been questionable. Hamlet himself, after first impressions, entertained doubts respecting the truth of the revelation until the termination of the performance of the inner-play. The ghost belief of Shakespeare's own time was made retrospective, and in that credence, as Willet observes in his Hexapla in Exodum, fol. Lond. 1608, p. 81,—"the divels doe counterfeit the spirits and soules of the dead; by this meanes the divell more strongly deceiveth, seeing men are readie to heare their parents and friends departed." The problem to be solved by Hamlet was to

revenge the murder without leaving a tainted name. Procrastination in decision upon affairs of importance, excepting where immediate action is stimulated or necessary, is the inevitable accompaniment of a highly reflective nature. It is true that Hamlet reproaches himself for the delay, but it is easy to see that all the time that delay arises from an excessive reflection over all the possible combinations that might result from action.

Take note of Hamlet's desire to respect his *perfect conscience* in his satisfaction at the opportunity, through the production of the original commission, of being enabled to publicly brand the King with attempted murder and so justify to the world the approaching revenge.

The tragedy of Hamlet is unquestionably the highest effort of artistic literary power yet given to the world. There is nothing to be found in real competition with it excepting in the other works of Shakespeare, but all are inferior to this great masterpiece. There is hardly a speech in the whole play which may not fairly be made the subject of an elaborate discourse, especially when viewed in connexion with its bearings, however occasionally remote,

on the character of Hamlet, the development of which appears to have been the chief object of the author not only in the management of the plot, but in the creation of the other personages who are introduced. There is contemporary evidence to this effect in the Stationers' Registers of 1602 in the title there given,—"the Revenge of Hamlett." In respect to this drama, as to many others by the same author, the prophetic words of Leonard Digges may be usefully remembered,—"Some second Shakespeare must of Shakespeare write," Poems, ed. 1640. Until this miracle occurs it is not likely that any æsthetic criticism on the tragedy will be successful, and certainly at present, notwithstanding the numbers of persons of high talent and genius who have discussed the subject, nothing has been nor is likely to be produced which is altogether satisfactory. The cause of this may perhaps to some extent arise from the latitude of interpretation the dramatic form of composition allows to the appreciation of the minor details of a character and the various plausible reasons that can often be assigned for the same line of action; something also may be due to the unconscious influence exercised by individual temperament

Jamb Roberts

xxvij^to Julij (1602)

Entred for his Copie vnder the handes
of m^r Passfield & m^r Waterson wardens
A booke called the Reliques of Hamlett
Duine Denmarke &c the Copie
Catholik Acted by the Lo: Chamberlen
his Seruantes

upon the exposition of that character, and again much to the defective state of the text; but the reason of the general failure in Hamlet criticism is no doubt chiefly to be traced to the want of ability to enter fully into the inspiration of the poet's genius. It may, however, be safely asserted that the simpler explanations are, and the less they are biased by the subtleties of the philosophical critics, the more likely they are to be in unison with the intentions of the author. Take, for instance, the well-established fact that immodesty of expression, the recollection derived it may often be accidentally and unwillingly from oral sources during the previous life, is one of the numerous phases of insanity, and not only are the song-fragments chanted by Ophelia but even the ribaldry addressed to her by Hamlet in the play-scene vindicated, there being little doubt that Shakespeare intended the simulated madness of the latter through his intellectual supremacy to be equally true to nature, the manners of his age permitting the delineation in a form which is now repulsive and inadmissible.

The present favourite idea is that in Hamlet the great dramatist intended to delineate an

irresolute mind oppressed by the weight of a mission which it is unable to accomplish. This is the opinion of Goethe, following, if I have noted rightly, an English writer in the Mirror of 1780. A careful examination of the tragedy will hardly sustain this hypothesis. So far from Hamlet being indecisive, although the active principle in his character is strongly influenced by the meditative, he is really a man of singular determination, and, excepting in occasional paroxysms, one of powerful self-control. His rapidity of decision is strikingly exhibited after his first interview with the Ghost. Perceiving at once how important it was that Marcellus, at all events, should not suspect the grave nature of the revelations that had been made, although they had been sufficient to have paralyzed one of less courage and resolution than himself, he outwits his companions by banter, treating the apparition with intentional and grotesque disrespect and jocularity at a moment when an irresolute mind would have been terrified and prostrated. Then Hamlet's powerful intellect not only enables him to recognise almost instantaneously the difficulties which beset his path, but immediately to devise a scheme by which some

of them may be overcome. The compliance with the advice of his Father's spirit, in strict unison with his own natural temperament, that the pursuit of his revenge was to harmonize with the dictates of his conscience, involving of course his duties to others, was attended by obstacles apparently insurmountable; yet all were to be removed before the final catastrophe, however acutely he might feel the effort of suppressing his desire for vengeance, that obligation the fulfilment of which was postponed by subtle considerations and by the fear lest precipitate action might leave him with "a wounded name," but a duty which, it is important to observe, was never sought to be relinquished. These influences practically render delay a matter of necessity with him, and having a murderer to contend against, one who, as he must have felt, would not have scrupled to design his assassination if at any moment safety could be in that way secured, his determination to assume the garb of insanity in the presence of the King and of those likely to divulge the secret, is easily and naturally explained.

Hamlet is wildly impetuous in moments of excitement, so that his utterances are not in-

variably to be accepted as evidences of his general nature. Much of the difficulty in the interpretation of the tragedy arises from the oversight of accepting his soliloquies as continuous illustrations of his character instead of being, as they mostly are, transient emanations of his subtle irritability. Even in the midst of his impetuosity the current of violent thought was subject to a controlling interruption by a sudden reaction arising from the influence of reason, but it was natural on occasions that, stirred by his desire for revenge, he should doubt the validity of his reasons for delay. A wide distinction also must be drawn in the matter of time for vengeance between action resulting from sudden and that from remoter provocation.

There seems to have been in Hamlet, so far as regards the commands of the apparition, an almost perpetual conflict between impulse and reason, each in its turn being predominant. The desire for revenge is at times so great that it is only by the strongest effort of will he resists precipitate action, then losing no pretext to find causes for its exercise overpowering the dictates of his penetrative genius.

There was an old English tragedy on the

subject of Hamlet which was in existence at least as early as the year 1589, in the representation of which an exclamation of the Ghost,—"Hamlet, revenge!"—was a striking and well-remembered feature. This production is alluded to in some prefatory matter by Nash in the edition of Greene's Menaphon issued in that year, here given V. L.,—"I'le turne backe to my first text, of studies of delight, and talke a little in friendship with a few of our triuiall translators. It is a common practise now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions that runne through euery arte and thriue by none, to leaue the trade of *Nouerint* whereto they were borne, and busie themselues with the indeuors of art, that could scarcelie latinize their necke-verse if they should haue neede; yet English *Seneca* read by candle light yeeldes manie good sentences, as *Bloud is a begger*, and so foorth: and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will affoord you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfulls of tragical speaches," Nash's Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities prefixed to Greene's Menaphon, 1589, first edition, the statement of there having been a previous one being erroneous. Ano-

ther allusion occurs in Lodge's Wits Miserie, 1596, p. 56,—"and though this fiend be begotten of his fathers own blood, yet is he different from his nature, and were he not sure that jealousie could not make him a cuckold, he had long since published him for a bastard;—you shall know him by this, he is a foule lubber, his tongue tipt with lying, his heart steeled against charity; he walks for the most part in black under colour of gravity and looks as pale as the visard of the ghost which cried so miserally at the Theator like an oister wife, *Hamlet, revenge.*" Again, in Decker's Satiromastix, 1602,—"*Asini.* Wod I were hang'd, if I can call you any names but Captaine and Tucca.—*Tuc.* No, fye'st, my name's *Hamlet, revenge*:—Thou hast been at Parris Garden, hast not?—*Hor.* Yes, Captaine, I ha plaide Zulziman there;" with which may be compared another passage in Westward Hoe, 1607,—"I, but when light wives make heavy husbands, let these husbands play mad *Hamlet,* and crie *revenge.*" So, likewise, in Rowlands' Night Raven, 1620, a scrivener, who has his cloak and hat stolen from him, exclaims,—"I will not cry, *Hamlet, revenge* my greeves." There is also reason to suppose that another

passage in the old tragedy of Hamlet is alluded to in Armin's Nest of Ninnies, 1608, —"ther are, as Hamlet sayes, things cald whips in store," a sentence which seems to have been well-known and popular, for it is partially cited in the Spanish Tragedie, 1592, and in the First Part of the Contention, 1594. It seems, however, certain that all the passages above quoted refer to a drama of Hamlet anterior to that by Shakespeare, and the same which is recorded in Henslowe's Diary as having been played at Newington in 1594 by "my Lord Admeralle and my lorde Chamberlen men,—9 of June, 1594, receved at Hamlet, viii. *s*," the small sum arising from the performance showing most probably that the tragedy had then been long on the stage. As Shakespeare was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company at that time, it is certain that he must have been well acquainted with the older play of Hamlet, one of a series of dramas on the then favourite theme of revenge aided by the supernatural intervention of a ghost.

There are a few other early allusions to the first Hamlet which appear to deserve quotation. "His fathers Empire and Gouernment,

was but as the *Poeticall Furie in a Stage-action*, compleat yet with horrid and wofull Tragedies: a first, but no second to any *Hamlet;* and that now *Reuenge*, iust *Reuenge* was comming with his Sworde drawne against him, his royall Mother, and dearest Sister, to fill vp those Murdering Sceanes," Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia, 1605, sig. K, the Italics and orthography here given V. L. from the original. "Sometimes would he overtake him and lay hands uppon him like a catch-pole, as if he had arrested him, but furious Hamlet woulde presently eyther breake loose like a beare from the stake, or else so set his pawes on this dog that thus bayted him that, with tugging and tearing one anothers frockes off, they both looked like mad Tom of Bedlam," Decker's Dead Terme, 1608. "If any passenger come by and, wondring to see such a conjuring circle kept by hel-houndes, demaund what spirits they raise there, one of the murderers steps to him, poysons him with sweete wordes and shifts him off with this lye, that one of the women is falne in labour; but if any mad Hamlet, hearing this, smell villanie and rush in by violence to see what the tawny divels are dooing, then they excuse

the fact, lay the blame on those that are the actors, and perhaps, if they see no remedie, deliver them to an officer to be had to punishment," Decker's Lanthorne and Candle-light or the Bell-mans Second Nights-Walke, 1609, a tract which was reprinted under more than one different title.

Mr. Collier, in his Farther Particulars, 1839, p. 68, cites a very curious passage,—"a trout, Hamlet, with four legs"—which is given as a proverbial line in Clarke's Paroemiologia Anglo-Latina or Proverbs English and Latine, 1639, p. 71. It is unnecessary to be too curious in searching for the exact meaning of the phrase, but, as Dr. Ingleby suggests to me, it is in all probability taken from the older play of Hamlet, which does not appear to have been entirely superseded at once by the new, or at least was long remembered by play-goers.

The preceding notices may fairly authorize us to infer that the ancient play of Hamlet,—1. Was written by either an attorney or an attorney's clerk who had not received a university education.—2. Was full of tragical high sounding speeches.—3. Contained the passage, "there are things called whips in store," spoken by Hamlet.—4. Included a very telling brief

speech by the Ghost in the two words, —Hamlet, revenge!—5. Was acted at the Theatre in Shoreditch and at the playhouse at Newington Butts.—6. Had for its principal character a hero exhibiting more general violence than can be attributed to Shakespeare's creation of Hamlet.

As the older Hamlet was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Company in the year 1594, it is possible that Shakespeare might then have undertaken the part of the Ghost, a character he afterwards assumed in his own tragedy. There is a curious inedited notice of this personage in Saltonstall's Picturæ Loquentes, 1635,—"a chamberlaine is as nimble as Hamlet's ghost, heere and everywhere, and when he has many guests, stands most upon his pantofles, for hee's then a man of some calling."

There are a number of critics, following the lead of Coleridge, who tell us that Shakespeare's judgment is commensurate with his genius, but they speak of the former generally as if it were always unfettered and neglect to add that it was continually influenced by the conditions under which he wrote, and that it was often his task to discover a route to a suc-

THE
Tragicall Hiſtorie of
HAMLET
Prince of Denmarke

By William Shake-ſpeare.

As it hath beene diuerſe times acted by his Highneſſe ſeruants in the Cittie of London : as alſo in the two Vniuerſities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elſe-where

At London printed for N.L. and Iohn Trundell.
1603.

cessful result through the tortuous angularities of a preconceived foreground. There is every reason to believe that this was the case with the tragedy of Hamlet, and, if so, it is certain that no genius but that of Shakespeare could have moulded the inartistic materials of a rude original into that harmonious composition which, although it has certainly been tampered with by the players and is therefore not the perfect issue of his free inspiration, is the noblest drama the world is ever likely to possess.

The repetition, in two texts, of a marked and unique verbal error is one of the best evidences we can have, short of absolute and independent testimony, of the fact that both of the texts were, in the portion in which the error occurs, derived from one and the same source. There is such an evidence, hitherto unnoticed as an evidence, in the recurrence of the word *sallied* in the early quarto editions of Hamlet. It is a strange perversion of the term *solid*, and one which appears to prove decisively that the quarto texts of the well-known speech in which it occurs were all taken from one authority. Hence, as it seems clear, inasmuch as no one could suppose that the edition of

1603 was used in the formation of that of 1604, we may fairly conclude that the text of the latter was in existence in the previous year, and that some portion of the former edition was taken from the manuscript of that text.

If this important stand-point be conceded, it will go far towards solving the great mystery which has hitherto surrounded the composition of the edition of 1603. It disposes, at all events, of the conjecture that we possess in that edition the first sketch of Shakespeare's tragedy, and leads to the conclusion that it was an abridged jumble compiled partly from the play-house copy, the use of which may have been surreptitiously obtained and progress arrested by discovery, partly from short-hand notes taken at the theatre and from actors' parts, and partly either by new and clumsy writing, or, as Mr. Aldis Wright conjectures, by the use of the older play.

This last suggestion appears to unravel much that would otherwise be inexplicable. It would account for the changes observable in the conduct of the story of the play and for the insertion of speeches that not only could not possibly have been written by Shakespeare at any period of his literary career, but which bear the unmis-

takeable impress of a still earlier style of composition. Take, for example, the following speech of the King, which occupies the position of Shakespeare's one of "O, my offence is rank:"—

> O, that this wet that falls upon my face
> Would wash the crime clear from my conscience!
> When I look up to heaven I see my trespass;
> The earth doth still cry out upon my fact,—
> Pay me the murder of a brother and a king,
> And the adulterous fault I have committed.
> O, these are sins that are unpardonable!
> Why, say thy sins were blacker than is jet,
> Yet may contrition make them as white as snow.
> Ay, but still to persever in a sin,
> It is an act against the universal power.
> Most wretched man, stoop, bend thee to thy prayer;
> Ask grace of Heaven to keep thee from despair.

noting that the ordinary phrase, "white as snow," is the only one adopted by the great dramatist. In this speech of the edition of 1603 must surely be observed a rude style of composition belonging rather to a play of 1589, or earlier, than to any drama of the seventeenth century. The same observation will apply to such lines as the following:

THE Tragicall Hiſtorie of HAMLET, *Prince of Denmarke.*

By William Shakeſpeare.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almoſt as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.

AT LONDON,
Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be ſold at his ſhoppe vnder Saint Dunſtons Church in Fleetſtreet. 1604.

Look you now, here is your husband,
With a face like Vulcan,
A look fit for a murder and a rape,
A dull dead hanging look and a hell-bred eye
To affright children and amaze the world.

and to several other passages. A distinct variation in the style of composition will be observed in some corresponding speeches. Thus the prototype of the fine lines of Shakespeare commencing, "O shame! where is thy blush," is to be traced in the following bald speech of the earlier author,—

Why, appetite with you is in the wane,
Your blood runs backward now from whence it came;
Who'll chide hot blood within a virgin's heart,
When lust shall dwell within a matron's breast?

and who can believe that Shakespeare at any time after his boyhood could have penned such lines as these,—

Observe the king, and you shall quickly find,
Hamlet being here, things fell not to his mind.

The scene between Horatio and the Queen, in which these lines occur, is peculiar to the edition of 1603, and the whole of the dialogue

bears the impress of an inferior and earlier dramatist, one whom, however, Shakespeare may possibly have had in his recollection when he used the expression, *sugar o'er*. Similarly, in the dialogue between the Lord and Hamlet in Act v, Sc. 2, the second speech of the former with a slight variation is adopted by Shakespeare, but the dialogue itself bears symptoms of the hand of another writer.

With respect to the first proposition, that the edition of 1603 was partly transcribed from the same playhouse copy which furnished the text of the impression of 1604, there are several indications of the truth of this opinion besides the error-coincidence above noticed. It seems impossible to account otherwise for the identity of a large number of lines common to both editions, that identity extending even sometimes to the spelling, and the nearly textual copy of more than one speech, as, for instance, that of Voltimand in act ii, sc. 2, while a comparison of the first act alone in the two copies would substantiate this position. Some peculiar orthography may also be fairly adduced as corroborative evidence, e.g., *Capapea* in the quartos for the *cap-a-pe* of the folio, *strikt* for *strict*, *cost* for *cast*, *troncheon* for *truncheon*,

Nemeon for *Nemian* (Nemean), *eager* for *aygre*, *Fortenbrasse* for *Fortinbras*, *penitrable* for *penetrable*, *rootes* for *rots*, &c.

The substitution of the names of Polonius and Reynaldo in the place of those of Corambis and Montano is inexplicable, whether we regard the edition of 1603 as a first sketch or in the light above suggested. Corambis, a trisyllable, not only suits the metre in the following lines in the mangled play,—

> God grant it may! Heav'ns keep my Hamlet safe!
> But this mischance of old Corambis' death
> Hath pierced so the young Ofelia's heart,
> That she, poor maid, is quite bereft her wits.

but also in the three instances in which the name of Polonius occurs in verse in Shakespeare's own tragedy. Hence it may be concluded that the great dramatist did not alter the former name on his own judgment, but that, for some mysterious reason, the change was made by the actors and inserted in the playhouse copy at some time previously to the appearance of the edition of 1604. The singularly incongruous mixture of names in the persons represented renders it probable that most of them were taken from an old play

belonging to a ruder period of dramatic composition, such a one as we may suppose to have been written before the year 1590. In the list there occur names of Roman, Grecian and Italian forms intermixed with those of Danish and German origin. The name of Osric, which occurs in the edition of 1603, was perhaps not in the old play, but one found by Shakespeare in his favourite Holinshed.

There are obvious indications in the edition of 1603 that portions of it were derived from rough notes taken in some abbreviated way, in all probability in short-hand, at the performance of the tragedy at the Globe. There are errors that cannot easily be explained on any other hypothesis. In act i, sc. 2, *writ down* becomes *right done.* In act ii, sc. 2, *in venom steept* is printed *invenom'd speech*, and by a similar ear-mistake we have, "the law hath writ those are the only men," ed. Timmins, p. 41. The uniform spelling of Ofelia in ed. 1603 may also be due to ear-notes. The celebrated "to be" speech appears to be a jumble formed out of insufficient memoranda, a conjecture supported by the circumstance of the word *borne* (bourn) being misunderstood and converted into *borne*, with another meaning. So in act iii, sc. 4,

"most secret and most grave," is converted into, "I'll provide for you a grave," ed. Timmins, p. 66, and probably the short-hand for *inheritor* was erroneously read as *honor*, the sentence being arranged to meet the latter reading. The three beautiful lines commencing, "anon as patient as the female dove," are abridged most likely through short-hand to the single one, "anon as mild and gentle as a dove." Occasionally the notes taken at the play must have been imperfect, as, for example, in the Player-King's speech commencing, "I do believe," where the word *think* having been omitted in the notes, the line is incorrectly made up in ed. 1603 by the word *sweet*. In act i, sc. 2, "a beast that wants discourse of reason," is printed, "a beast devoid of reason."

Then, again, there is the important fact that the compiler of the edition of 1603 either had access to the copy used by the editors of the first folio, or was possessed of notes or had recollected portions of that copy as they were recited on the stage. Thus, for example, the compiler has a garbled version of the sentence, "the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere," which is altogether omitted in the other quartos. The

THE Tragicall Hiſtorie of HAMLET,

Prince of Denmarke.

By William Shakeſpeare.

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AT LONDON.
Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be ſold at his ſhoppe vnder Saint Dunſtons Church in Fleetſtreet. 1605.

expressive line,—"what, frighted with false fire," is peculiar to ed. 1603 and the folio and is identical in both with the insignificant exception that the reading *fires* occurs in the former. The line, "that to Laertes I forgot myself," is found only in eds. 1603 and 1623, not in the other quartos. A trace of Hamlet's within speech, the repetitions of *mother* in act iii, sc. 4, in ed. 1623, not in ed. 1604, is found in ed. 1603. The Doctor of ed. 1604 is correctly given as the Priest in eds. 1603, 1623. Mere verbal coincidences, of which there are several, are of less evidential value, but *French* grave in eds. 1603 and 1623 for the *friendly* ground of ed. 1604 are variations hardly to be accounted for excepting on the above hypothesis.

Let us suppose that the compiler of ed. 1603, having obtained in some way copies of a few dialogues from the manuscript which furnished the text of ed. 1604, had also for his use a number of short-hand notes taken at the theatre, his own recollections of Shakespeare's acted tragedy and a copy of the older drama, then all becomes clear. In no other way does it seem possible to account for the extraordinary jumble printed in the first edition. The sources of the compilation are perpetually

changing. Thus, in the account of the Dumb Show the actors are represented as the King and Queen, as in Shakespeare's play, but soon afterwards, following a slightly corrupted version of the 1604 text of the dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia, the bald speeches of the older play are called into requisition and the King and Queen appear as the Duke and Duchess. Again, the name of Gonzago is correctly given in one speech in ed. 1603, while in another it is printed Albertus, and there are other variations in the names of persons and localities which may possibly be due to the short-hand writing of such names being easily misinterpreted. Thus the town of Vienna appears as Guyana, this variation occurring in an erroneous text of one of the genuine Hamlet speeches so incorrectly printed that he is made to address his uncle as Father. To this short-hand cause may also be attributed the orthography of the names of Valtemand, Cornelius, Laertes, Rosencraus, Guyldensterne and Gertrard in ed. 1604 being as follows in ed. 1603, — Voltemar, Cornelia, Leartes, Rossencraft, Gilderstone, Gertred. In some instances it would seem that the compiler had no memoranda of the names. In this way the omission

of those of Barnardo and Francisco may be explained.

It is worthy of remark that the edition of 1603, as appears from its title-page, could not have been published until after the nineteenth of May in that year, while the statement of the tragedy having been "*diuerse times* acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London" may probably lead to the conclusion that the book was not issued until late in the year. If so, its appearance may in some way have stimulated the production of the authentic edition of 1604, Lynge having managed to obtain the copyright in spite of the entry previously made by Roberts. What share Trundell possessed in the earlier edition is not known, but, as he was a young catchpenny publisher of inferior position, it is not unlikely that he was the person who surreptitiously obtained the imperfect and spurious copy, placing it in the hands of some obscure printer who would have less fear of the action of the Stationers' Company than a man of higher character would have entertained. It was certainly printed by some one who had a very small stock of type, as is shown by the evident deficiency of some of the Italic capitals.

1607. 5° Jac.

29. November

Jo. Smythick: Entred for his copies vnder the hands of
the wardens these bookes following
whiche doe belonge to Nicholas Ling

Viz:

6 a booke called Hamlett ——— vjd
9 The taminge of the Shrewe ——— vjd
10 Romeo and Iulett ——— vjd
11 Loues Labour Lost ——— vjd

The folio edition of 1623 appears to be at least partially a modernized and in some respects a carelessly printed version of ed. 1604, the omissions and additions being capriciously adopted, the latter not improbably having been in the manuscript from which the second quarto was printed. That there were intentional as well as accidental omissions in both may well be conjectured, but it is not likely that the exact state of the case will ever be determined. There seems, however, to be only one theory that can be reconciled with all the known facts, namely, that Shakespeare's Hamlet existed only in one copy which was tampered with from time to time by the players to suit the exigencies of the stage, and that the edition of 1603 was partially, and the editions of 1604 and 1623 wholly, taken from the same copy in different playhouse states.

The whole of the variations between the editions of 1603 and 1604 deserve minute examination, a task which is rendered comparatively easy by the careful and excellent parallel reprints of them edited by Mr. S. Timmins, 8vo. 1860.

It must be recollected that in 1602 Shake-

speare was in the zenith of his dramatic power, so that, if we have in the edition of 1603 the first sketch of Hamlet, as so many believe, that sketch must unquestionably belong to a much earlier period of his literary career, a circumstance which is inconsistent with the omission of all allusion to the tragedy by Meres. Again, although Roberts registered the copyright in 1602, he did not, so far as we know, print the work before 1604, and then with a note which appears to imply that the edition of 1603 was not "according to the true and perfect copy," but that the new one was "imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was" *by the use of that copy.*

Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet was produced on the stage either in 1601 or 1602, as appears from the entry of it on the books of the Stationers' Company on July 26th, 1602, —"James Robertes.—Entred for his copie under the handes of Mr. Pasfeild and Mr. Waterson, warden, a booke called the Revenge of Hamlett, Prince (of) Denmarke, as yt was *latelie acted* by the Lo: Chamberleyne his servantes." No copy of this date is known to exist, but a surreptitious and imperfect transcript of portions of the tragedy appeared in

14° die Septembris 1642.

Mr Fletcher

All Synnod ouer vnto him by Venture of a Note vnder his hand & Seale of ffrancis Smetwick Subscribed by Both the Wardens all his estate right Title interest wch the said ffrancis hath in the Copies hereafter following his wch did lately belong vnto Mr John Smetwick his father deceased §

vmo vijs.

Hamlett; a play;
The tameing of a Shrew.
Romeo & Juliett
Loues Labour Lost.

the following year under the title of,—"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet *Prince of Denmarke.* By William Shake-speare. As it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where. At London printed for N. L. and Iohn Trundell. 1603." In the next year, 1604, N. L., who was Nicholas Ling, obtained by some means a playhouse copy of the tragedy, not a copy in the state in which it left the hands of the author, but representing in the main the genuine words of Shakespeare. It was published under the following title,—"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, *Prince of Denmarke.* By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.—At London, Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in Fleetstreet. 1604." This impression was reissued in the following year, the title-page and a few leaves at the end, sigs. N. and O, being fresh printed, the sole alteration in the former being the substitution of 1605 for 1604. If the initials I. R. are those, as is most likely, of James

Roberts, a printer frequently employed by Ling, there must have been some friendly arrangement between the two respecting the ownership of the copyright, which certainly now belonged to the latter, as appears from the following entry on the books of the Stationers' Company, 19 November, 1607,—"Jo: Smythick.—Entred for his copies under thandes of the wardens these bookes folowing whiche dyd belonge to Nicholas Lynge, viz., a booke called Hamlett," &c. The copyright continued with Smethwick until his death in 1642, shortly after which event it was transferred, in the September of that year, to a Mr. Flesher. Smethwick issued an undated edition, another in 1611, and a third separate impression bearing the date of 1637. An edition printed "for John Smithwicke" in 1609 is mentioned in the Variorum Shakespeare of 1821, ii. 652, and there is reason for believing that an edition of that date was once and perhaps is now in existence, for I have notes on Hamlet with manuscript marginalia of the last century distinctly stated to be collations "with the quarto of 1609 and folio of 1664."

Hamlet is not mentioned by Meres in 1598, and it could not have been written before 1599,

in which year the Globe was erected, there being a clear allusion to that theatre in act ii. sc. 2. The tragedy continued to be acted after Shakespeare's company commenced playing at the Blackfriars' theatre, it being alluded to in a manuscript list, written in 1660, of "some of the most ancient plays that were played at Blackfriars." According to Downes, Sir William Davenant, "having seen Mr. Taylor of the Black-Fryars Company act it, who, being instructed by the author, Mr. Shaksepeur®, taught Mr. Betterton in every particle of it," Roscius Anglicanus, 1708. Roberts, in his answer to Mr. Pope's Preface to Shakespeare, 1729, thinks that Lowin was the original Hamlet.

The date of 1601 for the production of Hamlet appears to suit the internal evidence very well. That evidence decidedly leads to the conclusion that it could not have been written long before that time, and, without placing too much reliance on the general opinion that Shakespeare entirely laid aside his earlier style of composition at some particular era, that year is probably about the latest in which he would have written in the strain of the following lines, which, taken by

themselves, might be assigned to the period of the Two Gentlemen of Verona,—

> Fear it, Ophelia, fear it my dear sister;
> And keep you in the rear of your affection
> Out of the shot and danger of desire.
> The chariest maid is prodigal enough
> If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
> Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:
> The canker galls the infants of the spring,
> Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd;
> And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
> Contagious blastments are most imminent.
> Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear;
> Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Were it not that the elder play of Hamlet did not belong to Shakespeare's company, these lines might lead to the conjecture that he had made some additions to it long before he wrote his own complete tragedy. It is worthy of notice that some of the lines above cited are marked by inverted commas in the edition of 1604. The exact meaning of this deserves examination, and it is a singular circumstance that there are a few lines in ed. 1603 similarly distinguished, one of which appears to be an adaptation from Twelfth Night, ii. 4,—

> Come in, Ofelia, such men often prove
> Great in their words, but little in their love.

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET Prince of Denmarke.

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almoſt as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppy.

AT LONDON,
Printed for *Iohn Smethwicke* and are to be ſold at his ſhoppe in Saint *Dunſtons* Church yeard in Fleetſtreet. Vnder the Diall. 1611.

where the last line is noted in the edition of 1603 by inverted commas.

The late Mr. Henry Huth told me that some of the type used in the composition of the undated Hamlet is identical with that employed in the edition of 1611. It is also worth notice that Steevens, in his reprint of the latter, gives the title-page as commencing with the words, "the tragicall historie," so there may perhaps be two variations of that edition.

There was once in existence a copy of Speght's edition of Chaucer, 1598, with manuscript notes by Gabriel Harvey, one of those notes being in the following terms, — "the younger sort take much delight in Shakespear's Venus and Adonis, but his Lucrece and his tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke have it in them to please the wiser sort." This note was first printed in 1766 by Steevens, who gives the year 1598 as the date of its insertion in the volume, but, observes Dr. Ingleby, "we are unable to verify Steeven's note or collate his copy, for the book which contained Harvey's note passed into the collection of Bishop Percy, and his library was burnt in the fire at Northumberland House." Under these circumstances one can only add the

opinions of those who have had the opportunity of inspecting the volume. Firstly, from a letter of Percy to Malone, 1803,—"In the passage which extolls Shakespeare's tragedy Spenser is quoted by name among our flourishing metricians. Now this edition of Chaucer was published in 1598, and Spenser's death is ascertained to have been in January, 1598-9, so that these passages were all written in 1598, and proves that Hamlet was written before that year, as you have fixed it." Secondly, from a letter from Malone to Percy, written also in 1803, in which he gives reasons for controverting this opinion,—"when I was in Dublin I remember you thought that, though Harvey had written 1598 in his book, it did not follow from thence that his remarks were then written; whilst, on the other hand, I contended that, from the mention of Spenser, they should seem to have been written in that year; so that, like the two Reynoldses, we have changed sides and each converted the other; for I have now no doubt that these observations were written in a subsequent year. The words that deceive are, *our now flourishing metricians*, by which Harvey does not mean *now living* but now admired or in vogue; and what proves this is

that in his catalogue he mixes the living and the dead, for Thomas Watson was dead before 1593. With respect to Axiophilus I think you will agree with me hereafter that not Spenser, but another person, was meant. Having more than once named Spenser, there could surely be no occasion to use any mysterious appellation with respect to that poet. My theory is that Harvey bought the book in 1598 on its publication and then sat down to read it, and that his observations were afterwards inserted at various times. That passage, which is at the very end and subjoined to Lydgate's catalogue, one may reasonably suppose was not written till after he had perused the whole volume." Thirdly, from Malone's observations on the date of the tragedy, ed. 1821, ii. 369,— "In a former edition of this essay I was induced to suppose that Hamlet must have been written prior to 1598, from the loose manner in which Mr. Steevens has mentioned a manuscript note by Gabriel Harvey in a copy, which had belonged to him, of Speght's edition of Chaucer, in which, we are told, he has set down Hamlet as a performance with which he was well acquainted in the year 1598. But I have been favoured by Dr. Percy, the possessor of

the book referred to, with an inspection of it; and, on an attentive examination, I have found reason to believe, that the note in question may have been written in the latter end of the year 1600. Harvey doubtless purchased this volume in 1598, having, both at the beginning and end of it, written his name. But it by no means follows that all the intermediate remarks which are scattered throughout were put down at the same time. He speaks of *Translated Tasso* in one passage; and the first edition of Fairfax, which is doubtless alluded to, appeared in 1600."

It is not rashness in Hamlet on one occasion and procrastination on another, but a power of instantaneous action that could be controlled by the very briefest period of reflection, the great feature in his intellect being a preternaturally rapid reflective power, and men of genius almost invariably do meditate before action.

The discrepancy observed respecting the age of Hamlet may of course be one of the many instances of the poet not troubling himself about such matters, but I cannot help suspecting misprints in the numbers given in the old editions. Numerical errors are extremely

common in our early printed works. Lightfoote, in a leaf inserted at the end of the Second Part of the Harmony of the Foure Evangelists, 1647, mentions no fewer than twelve errors in numbers in one small table. The "23 yeeres" of the edition of 1604 are "this dozen yeare" in that of 1603.

The tragedy of Hamlet is familiarly alluded to more than once in the play of Eastward Hoe, printed in 1605, in a manner which indicates that the former drama was very well established in the memories of the audience. There is a parody on one of Ophelia's songs which is of some interest in regard to the question of the critical value of the quarto of 1604, the occurrence of the word *all* before *flaxen* showing that the former word was incorrectly omitted in all the early quartos excepting in that of 1603. One of the subordinate characters in Eastward Hoe is a running-footman of the name of Hamlet, who enters in great haste to tell the coachman to be ready for his mistress, whereupon Potkin, a tankard-bearer, says,—"Sfoote, Hamlet, are you madde? Whether run you nowe? You should brushe up my olde mistresse."

There is an unsupported statement by Oldys

24°. Augusti 1642.

Francis Smethwick Entred for his Copies by order of a full Court holden the 8th day of this Instant Moneth all such Copies hereafter mentioned as did belong unto Mr John Smethwick his late father deceased Salvo Jure cuiuscunq; } 12d.

Hamblett. a play.

The taming of a Shrew.

Romeo & Juliett.

Louis Labour Lost.

to the effect that Shakespeare received but five pounds for his tragedy of Hamlet, but whether from the company who first acted it, or from the publisher, is not mentioned. This is the only information that has reached us respecting the exact emolument received by Shakespeare for any of his writings, but it cannot be accepted merely on such an authority. It is, however, worthy of remark that Greene parted with his Orlando to the Queen's Players for twenty nobles, so the sum named appears to have been about the usual amount given for a play sold direct from the author to a company, but, in all probability, when Hamlet was produced, Shakespeare was playing at the Globe Theatre on shares.

Those critics who depreciate the love of Hamlet for Ophelia overlook the fact that, notwithstanding the bitterness of his regret for the death of his father, he was making love to her in the very depth of that sorrow. There appears to be something in his intense affection for her that is important in the construction of the tragedy, the complete effect of which I do not profess to understand.

There was a play called Dido and Æneas which was produced by the Lord Admiral's

Company early in the year 1598. "Layd owte for coper lace for the littell boye, for a valle for the boye, ageanste the playe of Dido and Eneus, the 3 of Jenewary, 1597, xxix. *s*," Henslowe's Diary, ed. Collier, p. 117. "Lent unto the company, when they fyrst played Dido at nyght, the some of thirty shillynges which wasse the 8 of Jenewary, 1597, I saye, xxx. *s*," ibid. Mr. Collier also mentions another play, called Æneas' Revenge, which was produced some time afterwards.

In the second scene of the first act there is a recollection of the old play of Jeronymo, produced originally about the year 1588. "Wax, wax, Horatio," First Part of Jeronimo, ed. 1605, sig. C. 3.

The earliest allusions to Shakespeare's tragedy hitherto discovered in the printed works of contemporary writers are those in Scoloker's Daiphantus or the Passions of Love, 1604. In a quaint dedication, observes Douce,—he says, "It [the epistle] should be like the *never-too-well read Arcadia*, where the *prose* and *verse* (*matter* and *words*) are like his *mistresses* eyes, one still excelling another and without Corivall: or to come home to the vulgars element, like *friendly Shake-speare's tragedies*, where the *commedian*

rides, when the *tragedian* stands on tiptoe: *Faith it should please all, like prince Hamlet.* But in sadnesse, then it were to be feared *he would runne mad.* In sooth I will not be moonesicke, to please: nor out of my wits though I displeased all." This notice is of interest as showing the early and immediate popularity of the character of Hamlet. In the body of his poem Scoloker quotes a line from the play,—"Oh, I would weare her in my heart's heart-gore," the corresponding passage in Shakespeare being found in the edition of 1604 not in that of 1603. There are two other allusions to Hamlet in the same work,—

His breath he thinkes the smoke; his tongue a cole,
Then calls for bottell ale to quench his thirst.
Runs to his Inke pot, drinkes, then stops the hole,
And thus growes madder then he was at first.
Tasso he finds, by that of *Hamlet*, thinkes,
Tearmes him a *mad-man;* than of his Inkhorne drinks.

Calls players fooles, the foole he judgeth wisest,
Will learne them action, out of Chaucers Pander:
Proves of their poets bawdes even in the highest,
Then drinkes a health; and sweares it is no slander.
Puts off his cloathes; his shirt he onely weares,
Much like *mad-Hamlet;* thus as passion teares.

The words,—"Alas, poore ghost,"—are

quoted in Massinger's Old Law, ed. 1656. If that play was really written in the year 1599, as would seem from an allusion in it, those three words may have been taken from the earlier tragedy of Hamlet.

William Sly is introduced personally in the induction to Marston's Malcontent, 1604, and, adds Malone, "from his there using an affected phrase of Osrick's in Hamlet, we may collect that he performed that part." This deduction is hardly tenable, for the phrase alluded to was conventional and in general use. Hamlet is, however, clearly quoted in that play of 1604,— "illo, ho, ho, ho, arte there, olde true penny?" There is another passage in the same drama commencing, "in body how delicate," generally considered to be imitated from Shakespeare. This may or may not be the case, but the wording is not sufficiently close to enable us to form a decisive opinion.

Notwithstanding the extreme length of the tragedy of Hamlet, there is such a marvellously concentrative power displayed in much of the construction and dialogue that in respect to a large number of the incidents and speeches a wide latitude of interpretation is admissible, the selection in those cases from possible explana-

tions depending upon the judgment and temperament of each actor or reader. Hence it may be confidently predicted that no æsthetic criticisms upon this drama will ever be entirely and universally accepted, and as certainly that there will remain problems in connexion with it which will be subjects for discussion to the end of literary time. Amongst the latter the reason or reasons which induced Hamlet to defer the fulfillment of his revenge may perhaps continue to hold a prominent situation, although the solution of that special mystery does not seem to be attended with difficulties equal to those surrounding other cognate enquiries which arise in the study of the tragedy.

When Hamlet says,—"he that plays the King shall be welcome; his Majesty shall have tribute of me,"—may we accept these words as evidences of an instantaneous resolution, one of the instances of his preternatural activity of thought, to make use of a play as a means of detection? There may have been all along a latent suspicion that the apparition, in accordance with the general belief, may have been a deception of Satan, and this possibility appears to have occurred to him in the first interview.

There is a very curious early tradition

respecting Hamlet recorded in Gildon's edition of Langbaine's Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, published either in or before the year 1699. "I have been told that he writ the scene of the Ghost in Hamlet at his house which bordered on the charnel-house and church-yard," p. 126. This reads like a silly invention, but it is a singular fact that the house at Stratford-on-Avon so situated was inhabited by Thomas Greene, the poet's cousin, solicitor and friend. It was a house at which Shakespeare must have been a frequent visitor, and possibly the tragedy may there have been composed. At all events the tradition is more worthy of attention than the palpable invention alluded to in Guthrie's Essay upon English Tragedy, 8vo., published about the year 1760, p. 19, where that writer refers to "the known tradition that Shakespear shut himself up all night in Westminster Abbey when he wrote the scene of the ghost in Hamlet." The feeble idea that it is necessary for the imagination of a great writer to be influenced by immediate associations is no doubt the origin of the Ghost scene being thus absurdly explained.

The tragedy of Hamlet was performed by

English actors at Dresden in the year 1626. There is no reason for supposing that this was other than Shakespeare's drama, or that it had any connexion with a later German play on the same subject further than that the author of the latter appears to have made some use of the edition of 1603. The earliest copy of the German tragedy known to exist bears the date of 1710, nor is there any probability to be derived from its style or other evidence that it was written many years previously. As Mr. Furnivall justly observes,—"the whole matter of this German play is much too risky to found anything certain on." Any one who fancies that in this drama are preserved traces of the old Hamlet beyond any that may have been derived from the copy of 1603 will do well to peruse Mr. Furnivall's able and decisive observations on the subject in his Preface to the fac-simile of that edition.

Amongst the numerous unsupported conjectures respecting this tragedy may be mentioned that, when Shakespeare drew the characters of, 1. Hamlet; 2. Horatio; 3. Claudius; 4. The Queen, he had in his mind, 1. The Earl of Essex, or Sir Phillip Sydney, or himself; 2. Lord Southampton or Fulke Greville;

Edw: Brewster
Rob: Bwcl°.

40 Augusti 1626

Memorand ouer & aboue ytm by mr Barker and Consent of ye full Court of ye Mistaulle & Assigne & State wch Edward Pakington Esq Sr Edward Sands & Edwin Sandys Esqrs after mencioned viz^l

} Wch.

The Historye of Hen: the fift and the play of the Iewes
Mr. Fabian right in Shakespeares plaies or any of them
Sr John old castle a play.
Tytus & Andronicus
Historye of Hamblett

3. The Earl of Leicester; 4. Mary Queen of Scots. Although some of these suggestions are ingeniously supported, there is not one of them which rests on any kind of real evidence or external probability.

The Rev. H. P. Stokes, in his excellent work on the Chronology, 1878, p. 68, seems to go too far in concluding from the entry of August, 1626, that Pavier owned any interest in the copyright of Hamlet. The "Historye of Hamblett" is *not* included in that entry among Shakespeare's plays, but is one in a list of books that includes several novels, while the Hamlet assigned by Bird to Cotes in 1630 was not necessarily a play, for it is not specifically noticed as one, and there is at least one prose history mentioned in the list in which it occurs. We may be tolerably certain that the Hamlet owned by Pavier was either the older drama or the prose version of the story, in all probability the latter, for the edition of 1608, the only one known, was "imprinted by Richard Bradocke for Thomas Pavier." Its publication was no doubt suggested by the popularity of Shakespeare's tragedy, but there was probably a much earlier edition of the history, for, on a cursory glance over the story in Belle-

forest, I observe that the counselor is concealed and killed in a bed, not behind the arras, as in the incident in the English version adopted by Shakespeare through the medium of the older play. A careful examination of the French version may possibly yield other instances. The name of the hero in Belleforest is given as Amleth, following Saxo Grammaticus, so that most likely the play-name of Hamlet was derived from that earlier edition as well as his feigned madness. Those critics who fancy that Hamlet's insanity was real would do well to peruse the history. Shakespeare was far too practical a dramatist to make an alteration that would have materially weakened the plot of the tragedy.

There is a verse in Nicholson's Acolastus his After-witte, 1600, which some critics think is imitated from Shakespeare's Hamlet, i. 4,—

> Art thou a God, a man, or else a ghost?
> Com'st thou from heaven, where blisse and solace dwell?
> Or from the ayrie could-ingendring coast?
> Or from the darkesome dungeon-hole of hell?
> Or from the secret chambers of the deepe?
> Or from the graves where breathles bodies sleepe?

but the language does not appear to be suffi-

ciently close to warrant that supposition, while the idea is found in other and earlier works.

The author of Dolarnys Primerose or the First Part of the Passionate Hermit, 1606, had Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet in his mind when penning the following verse,—

> Why might not this haue beene some lawiers pate,
> The which sometimes brib'd, brawl'd, and tooke a fee,
> And lawe, exacted to the highest rate?
> Why might not this be such a one as he?
> Your quirks and quillets now, Sir, where be they?
> Now he is mute and not a word can say.

but the recollection was either of the printed version of 1603, or, what is more probable, of the play as originally acted, as is evidenced by the use of the word *quirks*, which is peculiar to that edition.

In Northward Hoe, 1607, the passage, "yourself shall keep the key of it," may be a quotation from Hamlet, and Webster, in his White Divel, published in 1612, appears to refer to Ophelia's speech in the following lines, sig. L,—

> There's rosemarie for you and rue for you,
> Hearts-ease for you.

and there is another allusion to Shakespeare's

tragedy in the following lines in Fletcher's Scornful Ladie, 1616,—

> I will runne mad first, and if that get not pitty,
> Ile drowne myselfe to a most dismall ditty.

See a variety of other notices in Dr. Ingleby's excellent and important collection, the Centurie of Prayse, edited by Miss Toulmin Smith, 1879.

It appears from a stage-direction in the quarto of 1603 that at that time Ophelia in act iv. sc. 5 came on the stage playing upon a lute, no doubt accompanying herself on that instrument when singing the snatches of the ballads. "Enter Ofelia playing on a lute, and her haire downe singing," ed. 1603. No such direction occurs in the other quartos, while the folio has merely,—"Enter Ophelia distracted."

Unless we bear in mind that Shakespeare's treatment of the story of Hamlet was influenced by the succession of events in the older tragedy, and that the construction of his own drama was to some extent fettered by the circumstances under which he wrote, there can never be an æsthetic criticism on Hamlet which will be other than one that involves an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile incon-

sistencies that are not explicable on any other hypothesis.

"I must to England; you know that," act iii. sc. 4, and onwards. "When, where or from whom," observes Mr. P. A. Daniel, "could they have had this intelligence? The Queen might possibly have known that some such scheme was in contemplation, but could not know that it had been resolved on, and Hamlet himself must have been quite in ignorance of the matter. The author's knowledge of the plot seems to have cropped out here prematurely," Time Analysis, p. 212. Precisely so, and in the same way it is assumed that the King was carefully guarded, that Hamlet was surrounded by spies, &c. The words of the text just quoted show decisively either that Shakespeare, in the rapidity of composition, had neglected to be sufficiently explanatory of his plot, or that a knowledge of it by the audience was taken for granted.

In some anonymous verses on the tombs in Westminster Abbey, printed in Weever's Funerall Monuments, 1631, p. 493, occur the following lines,—

> Bid her paint till day of doome,
> To this favour she must come.

There is a reference to one of Hamlet's speeches in Heywood's Apology for Actors, 1612, sig. C. 4,—"it instructs him to fit his phrases to his action and his action to his phrase, and his pronuntiation to them both."

Whoever has seen a manuscript play of the time of Shakespeare intended for the use of a theatre, with its alterations, erasures, inserted slips and marks of omission, would be apt to believe that the tragedy of Hamlet, as we now have it, is a playhouse not the author's text, including in all probability some of his rejected portions. That the repulsive speech of Hamlet at the end of the third act owes its violence of thought to the older play, and was one of the latter, can hardly be doubted. It were a bold step for an editor to erase it, yet by so doing he would confer an immense literary service. In old plays alterations of every kind were made for the convenience of the actors. In a manuscript of one which I have lately seen, written in 1601, there are alterations for actors with the observation,—"these alterations the one or the other, you may chuse the better." In another manuscript drama of the same date the writer, after giving two forms of a speech, quaintly adds to one,—"if this shall not be so fitt for the

understanding, it being uncouth to the audience, the other alteration may well serve." Sometimes the alterations were made in reference to the theatre in which the play was to be acted. Attached to some altered speeches in another dramatic manuscript of 1603 is the note,—"thus for some or for Powles."

With the exception of the opportunity given at the unfortunate and inexplicable prayer-scene there was none, after the termination of the performance of the inner-play, for Hamlet's revenge until the concluding scene of the tragedy. At that performance the King is of course assumed to be surrounded by his adherents and the Court, and immediately afterwards his fears are too much aroused for him to allow himself wittingly to be unguarded. In the words,—"I must to England" there is an admission of the King's absolute power, and, after the disposal of the Chamberlain's body, Hamlet himself is put under restraint.

In the Satiro-mastix, 1602, Tucca comes upon the stage, "his boy after him with two pictures under his cloake," sig. L. 2. These pictures are used in a manner somewhat similar to that adopted by modern actors of Hamlet, but differently, I believe, to the scene as ori-

ginally acted, so that the incident is not necessarily, as has been supposed, any evidence of its adaptation or imitation of one in any play of Hamlet. "How the graceful attitude of a man," observes Davies, "could be given in a miniature I cannot conceive. In the infancy of the stage we know that our theatres had no moving scenes. In our author's time they made use of tapestry, and the figures in tapestry might be of service to the action of the player in the scene between Hamlet and the Queen." In Rowe's time, 1709, the pictures, two large framed portraits, were hung on the walls of the chamber, and this was probably the custom after the Restoration, the separate paintings taking the place of those in the tapestry, the latter accidental and imaginary, Hamlet on the ancient stage no doubt pointing to any part of the arras in which figures were represented. In the old German play Hamlet is made to say to his mother,—"but look, in that gallery hangs the counterfeit resemblance of your first husband and there hangs the counterfeit of your present husband." It clearly appears from Hamlet's speech in the genuine tragedy that the portraits were intended to be whole lengths and this would be inconsistent with the notion

of miniatures, to say nothing of the absurdity of his carrying about with him one of the "pictures in little" the rage for the possession of which he elsewhere disparages.

At the commencement of the fifth act there was on the old stage and no doubt in Shakespeare's time an incident of by-play, enacted by the first grave-digger, which is unfortunately now omitted,—unfortunately, for the reposing contrast of a comic episode after tragic tension was thus judiciously heightened. I refer to the once popular stage-trick of that personage taking off a number of waistcoats one after the other, an artifice which has been laid aside for many years, the player who first rejected it being Chatterley at some time about the year 1814. There is a graphic description of the incident in an account of the tragedy as performed at Covent Garden in Kemble's time, 1811, in Simond's Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain, ed. 1815, ii. 122,—"it is enough to mention the grave-diggers to awaken in France the cry of rude and barbarous taste, and were I to say how the part is acted it might be still worse. After beginning their labour and breaking ground for a grave, a conversation begins between the two grave-

diggers. The chief one takes off his coat, folds it carefully and puts it by in a safe corner; then, taking up his pick-axe, spits in his hand, gives a stroke or two, talks, stops, strips off his waistcoat still talking, folds it with great deliberation and nicety and puts it with the coat, then an under-waistcoat, still talking, another and another. I counted seven or eight each folded and unfolded very leisurely in a manner always different, and with gestures faithfully copied from nature. The British public enjoys this scene excessively, and the pantomimic variations a good actor knows how to introduce in it are sure to be vehemently applauded." A similar piece of buffoonery was practised at the performance of the Dutchess of Malfi, certainly produced before March, 1619, for when the Cardinal tells the Doctor to put off his gown, the latter, according to the stage-direction in ed. 1708, "puts off his four cloaks one after another."

Another old stage-trick was that of Hamlet starting to his feet, and throwing down the chair on which he had been sitting, in his consternation at the sudden appearance of his Father's spirit in act iii. sc. 4. This incident is pictured in the frontispiece to the tragedy in

Rowe's edition of Shakespeare, 1709, and it is no doubt of much greater antiquity. It is said that Garrick had a chair made expressly for the scene with feet so constructed that a slight touch would overturn it.

Traditional usages of the kind just cited, belonging in all probability to Shakespeare's own time, should not be lightly discontinued; but care should be taken to distinguish them from those which resulted solely from the exigencies created by the poverty of the ancient stage. We may rely upon it that it was to these and not to Shakespeare's voluntary election that Hamlet is made to terminate the third act by the removal of the body of Polonius, a proceeding which was adopted through the necessity of clearing the stage for the fourth act in a natural manner before the use of drop or other curtains between the acts. "Exit Hamlet with the dead body," ed. 1603. "Exit Hamlet tugging in Polonius," ed. 1623. It would not be in good taste to revive a repulsive action compulsatively adopted by the old players and now no longer necessary.

Burbage was the first actor of Hamlet in Shakespeare's tragedy. His performance is spoken of in terms of high commendation, but

there is no record of his treatment of the character, his delineation probably differing materially from that of modern actors. Stage tradition merely carries down the tricks of the profession, no actor entirely replacing another, and, in the case of Hamlet, hardly two of recent times, whose performances I have had the opportunity of witnessing, but who are or have been distinct in manner and expression, and even in idea. Few actors or readers can be found to agree respecting Shakespeare's conception of the character. This, however, may be safely asserted, that no criticism on Hamlet will ever be permanent which does not recognise the sublimity of his nature. Horatio understood Hamlet better than any one, and his judgment of him doubtlessly expresses Shakespeare's own estimate,—

Now cracks a noble heart;—Good night, sweet prince;
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

a "noble heart" that ever shrank from an act that would have resulted in his own aggrandizement, for, although the monarchy was elective not hereditary, the succession of Hamlet had been proclaimed by the King and tacitly accepted.

It is, I hope, unnecessary to observe that, in venturing to conclude with my own notion of Hamlet, I have no confidence that the interpretation will meet with any general acceptance. It should of course be taken for granted that Hamlet, like other impetuous men of genius, and, indeed, like other men of all kinds, does not always in the moment of irritation or unexpected surprisals say exactly what he would on reflection, for otherwise, if isolated utterances are in every case to be received as valid evidences, no theory in the world can ever extricate us from the labyrinth of inconsistencies.

In all that pertains to the revenge of Hamlet it is English not Scandinavian thought which pervades the tragedy. There was no available practical evidence of the crime to be avenged, and if Hamlet had slain the King before the guilt of the latter had been publicly determined, he would have appeared before the nation as a vulgar assassin who had murdered his mother's husband with the selfish object of ascending the throne. Conscious that his own single belief in the accuracy of the supernatural revelation could not satisfy that public opinion to which he is so nervously sensitive, there is ever a

struggle between resentment and consciousness with a fear lest the former may be victorious. He is further restrained by the possession of a tender conscience and by what, notwithstanding outbursts of violence under irritation, was an intense gentleness of character. Both these qualities make him shrink from decisive action in cold blood, that is to say, in a case in which the provocation was not immediately precedent. When such a provocation does occur, as when he suspects Claudius of treachery behind the arras, he forgets for a moment the consequences of action, while similarly, on the next occasion, the announcement that "the king's to blame" precedes and justifies to his immediate conscience the final catastrophe that anticipated merely by a few hours the promulgation of other evidence that would have sanctioned to the world a retaliation for the first crime.

ÆSTHETIC CRITICISM.

Many many years ago the benevolent fairies, commiserating the uncultivated taste of the English people, sought to elevate it by the presentation of the most lovely park the world had ever seen. Although it was situated in the midst of picturesque undulating scenery and watered by gurgling streams that made "sweet music with the enamel'd stones," the chief attractions were a number of isolated coppices of wild luxuriance and exquisite beauty. There was also, strange to say, not a single flower or plant or bird or tree which was identically the same in any two of the copses, so that the study of Nature and the beautiful could there be indefinitely pursued.

Like other blessings, the park was not fully appreciated at first, and it was to some extent injured and even mutilated by those who ought to have preserved it in its integrity. It was afterwards neglected for several generations, but, notwithstanding these disadvantages, such

was the innate exquisite beauty of the fairies' gift that, when once a better taste arose, the park became the resort of daily increasing crowds of enraptured visitors. Amongst the last were a number of amateur labourers, some removing noxious weeds and extraneous additions, others with water-cans clearing away the blight, while some, to the amusement but also with the esteem of the spectators, would think nothing of spending weeks or months in cleaning a single leaf. These were the best days the park has ever seen, those in which the true lover of Nature could freely and uninterruptedly study her "infinite book of secrecy." But after a while some busy-bodies must needs erect sign-posts to guide the visitors to those objects which they, the busy-bodies, considered the most worthy of attention. The posts did not improve the landscape, but still no great harm was done and few people took notice of them.

Another generation, and men arose who were not contented with segregated visits to the coppices. Nothing less than a bird's-eye view of the whole park would content them, one in which the entire region and the supposed consonance of its various districts could

be comprehended in one glance. A balloon was accordingly chartered for the purpose, the passengers, in their eagerness for the extended survey, forgetting that objects so viewed might be classified more generically than a separate minute examination would sanction. In their opinion also the amateur labourers were a lot of boobies. The latter were indifferent to their ridicule and their balloon, but they made a vigorous opposition to a proposal of the new comers, who positively wanted to abolish the old fashioned water-cans by laying down irrigating pipes throughout the park, the consumption of water of course to be estimated by meter.

The balloon daily ascends freighted with æsthetic critics, most of them of high talent and some of genius. No one in his senses would treat such men otherwise than with deference, but surely students with other aspirations may be allowed to retain their own opinions without being fairly accused of disrespect to their philosophical contemporaries, and certainly no allusions in the preceding little fanciful sketch should be so interpreted. For my own part I believe that æsthetic, or, as Mr. Aldis Wright felicitously terms it, sign-

post criticism, unless restricted within the narrowest practical limits, is positively mischievous. The works of Shakespeare are involuntarily adapted to the various hearts and instincts of us all, and any system which disturbs that adaptation enervates and cripples the freedom of individual thought without which no one can effectively hear—

> —sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
> Warble his native wood-notes wild.

and it is, moreover, my present firm belief that no two characters in Shakespeare are either identical or the germ one of the other, that each play was written by itself and for itself without any design of consonance with the others and that it should be so read; but, at the same time, it is hardly necessary to say that a longer course of study may modify these views. Those who have lived as long as myself in the midst of Shakespearean criticism will be careful not to be too certain of anything.

POSTSCRIPT.

The preceding memoranda were in type before I noticed that one or two of my views had been anticipated by Ritson in the year 1783, in remarks that have lately been followed and amplified by two German writers, Klein and Werder. This I gather from the admirable variorum Hamlet edited by Mr. H. H. Furness of Philadelphia, 2 vols. 8vo. 1877, a work which exhibits in a strong light the practical futility of æsthetic commentary. In the first volume there is the immortal text with explanatory notes, a book of which one can never be weary. In the second, which contains the lucubrations of the philosophical critics, there is much no doubt that is exceedingly clever, but, taken as a whole, an almost impenetrable mass of conflicting opinions, wild conjectures and leaden contemplations, a huge collection of antagonistic materials which, if not repulsive, is certainly appalling.

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